

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat

Q. Mr. President, do you accept the idea not to invite Yasser Arafat, or are you going to invite him and meet with him here?

President Bush. Well, one of the things that the Prime Minister and I talked about is our engagement in the Middle East. I will do everything we can to help calm nerves, to encourage there to be dialog in a peaceful way. I haven't made up my plans on who I'm going to meet with yet. I do have some plans in place. I'm looking forward to meeting the King of Jordan, for example.

But one of the things that I will do is use whatever persuasive powers I have to create an environment in which peace can flourish. I've got great confidence in the Prime Minister, and so do the Israeli people. He got 66 percent of the vote. He did a little better at the polls than I did. *[Laughter]* You know what I mean, Mr. Prime Minister.

Future Middle East Negotiations

Q. Prime Minister Sharon, did you manage to convince the President Bush that you will not negotiate underfire? Do you think that this message is clear, and do you think that President Bush agrees with you about this issue?

Prime Minister Sharon. I didn't have to talk to President Bush about that. I think what I understand the policy of this great democracy, the United States, is that one should not surrender to terror and pressure and violence. And therefore, I don't have to work too hard on this thing. I even didn't try.

But I understand, and I believe that they do, and I appreciate that respect that—to that approach that one should never surrender to terror and that the free world should struggle against terror, local, regional, and international terror. And I'm sure that the United States leads such a struggle, and we are a partner in the struggle. I think that is in the interest of every democratic state, because in order to keep stability—and I'm a great supporter of the President's policy of keeping stability in the Middle East—the main danger to stability is terror. And that, I believe, will be—should be the common

goal of every democratic country in the free world.

Q. Do you think that Arafat is the danger for the stability in the Middle East, Mr. Sharon?

Prime Minister Sharon. I don't think that I have to add about Arafat. Everyone knows what are the steps of terror and who is behind the steps. I don't think I have to add anything about that. It's clear.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to King Abdullah II of Jordan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Central Intelligence Agency Employees in Langley, Virginia

March 20, 2001

Thank you, all. I learned that move from my mother. *[Laughter]*

Thank you very much, George. I appreciate your kind introduction. I also want to thank you for agreeing to continue to serve as the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. You've done really good work here. The people that work here appreciate it, and I appreciate it, as well.

I also wanted to visit early in my administration to tell you all how much I value your work. The CIA and all the members of our intelligence community make a vital contribution to our Nation's security. I know this firsthand; I'm your customer. *[Laughter]* I see your product every morning at 8 o'clock sharp, and it's always first-rate.

I appreciate the work that goes into the briefing. I realize that the information inside it contains—represents the work of thousands of dedicated and daring men and women, at home and abroad. It is truly an honor to be among you and to be in this building.

I've flown into an airport once called George Bush. *[Laughter]* But I've never been in a Center like this. *[Laughter]* Seeing that sign on the way in, as you can imagine, made me feel really proud. But I was also struck by the contrast between today's world

and the world as it looked 25 years ago, when my dad was the DCI.

To say that a lot has changed is an understatement. Back then, America faced an overarching threat, and everything we did, from strategy to resource allocation, was oriented to defending against that threat. Today, that single threat has been replaced by new and different threats, sometimes hard to define and defend against; threats such as terrorism, information warfare, the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. Back then, freedom was in peril. Today, freedom is taking root in more and more lands around the world.

In retrospect, the world of 1976 looks staid and static compared to the revolutions of change that characterize our times. But what hasn't changed, what isn't different is the fact that sound intelligence is still critically important to America's national security. The challenges are new, but we still need your work to help us meet them. The opportunities are new, but we need your help to take advantage of them. But perhaps most of all, in a world where change, itself, seems to be the only constant, we need your help to anticipate change and to shape it in a way that favors freedom.

Yours is a mission of service and sacrifice in a world of great uncertainty and risk. America's commitments and responsibilities span the world and every time zone. Every day you help us meet those responsibilities with your quiet excellence. And nothing speaks louder to your legacy of service and sacrifice than the 77 stars on the wall behind me.

The American people aren't told much about your labors. In fact, you might be the only Federal agency where not making the newspapers or network news qualifies as good news. *[Laughter]* This is by necessity. But you need to know your President knows about your fine contributions to our Nation's security. And you also need to know that Americans are proud of you and the vital work that each of you does for your country. The operations officers, the analysts, the scientists, the technical experts, the intelligence officers who work for other agencies—each of you is important to the cause of freedom.

And for that I say, God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. in the original headquarters building lobby at the George Bush Center for Intelligence.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Repeal Federal Ergonomics Regulations

March 20, 2001

Today I have signed into law S.J. Res. 6, a measure that repeals an unduly burdensome and overly broad regulation dealing with ergonomics. This is the first time the Congressional Review Act has been put to use. This resolution is a good and proper use of the Act because the different branches of our Government need to be held accountable.

There needs to be a balance between and an understanding of the costs and benefits associated with Federal regulations. In this instance, though, in exchange for uncertain benefits, the ergonomics rule would have cost both large and small employers billions of dollars and presented employers with overwhelming compliance challenges. Also, the rule would have applied a bureaucratic one-size-fits-all solution to a broad range of employers and workers—not good government at work.

The safety and health of our Nation's workforce is a priority for my Administration. Together we will pursue a comprehensive approach to ergonomics that addresses the concerns surrounding the ergonomics rule repealed today. We will work with the Congress, the business community, and our Nation's workers to address this important issue.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 20, 2001.

NOTE: S.J. Res. 6, approved March 20, was assigned Public Law No. 107-5.